

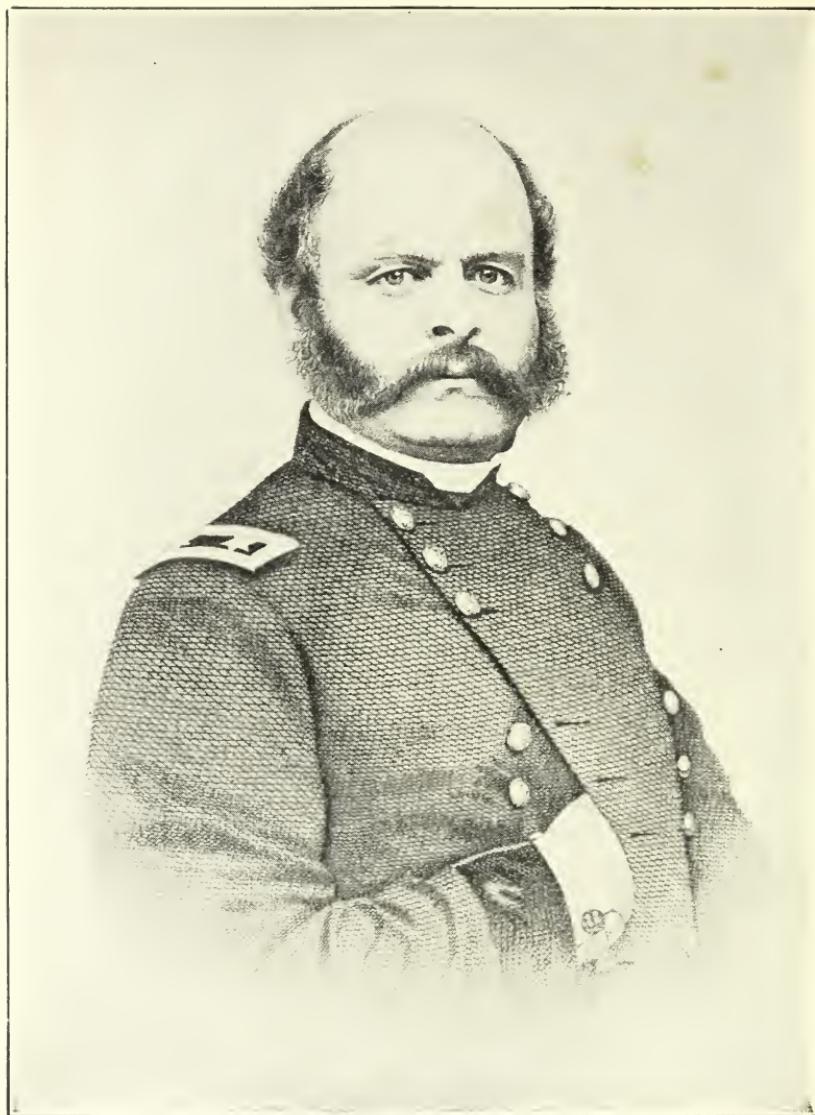






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MAJOR-GENERAL AMBROSE EVERETT BURNSIDE

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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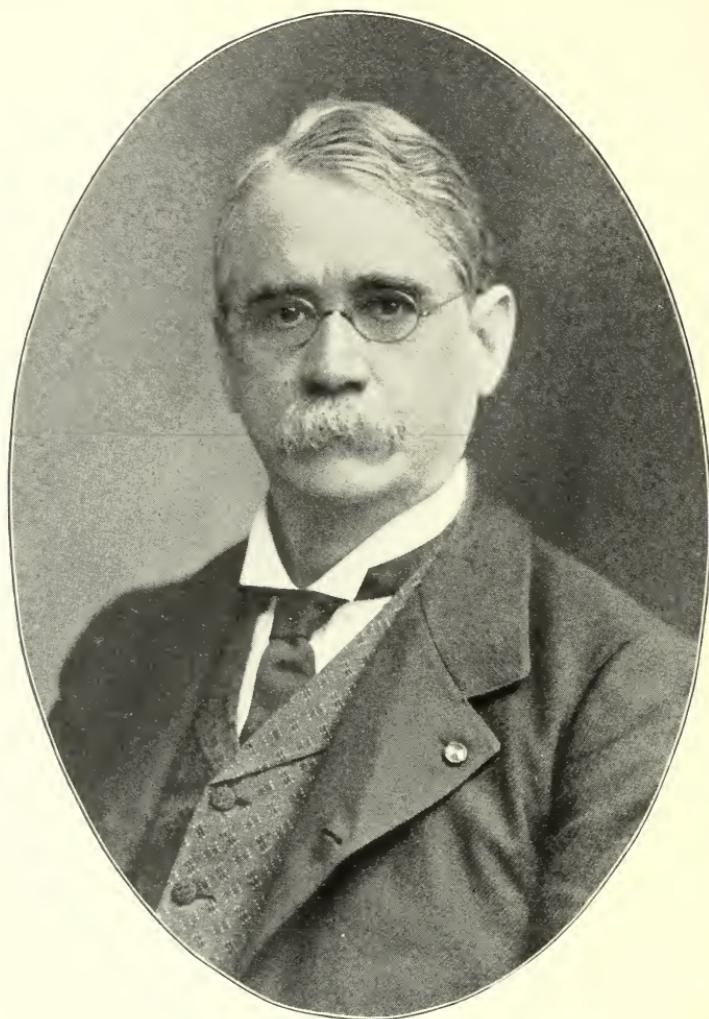
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LIEUTENANT DANIEL R. BALLOU

The Military Services  
OR  
Maj.-Gen. Ambrose Everett Burnside  
IN THE CIVIL WAR,

And their Value as an Asset of his Country  
and its History.

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BY  
DANIEL R. BALLOU,  
[Late Second Lieutenant Twelfth Regiment Rhode Island Volunteer  
Infantry.]

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THE MILITARY SERVICES  
OF  
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IT is a universally acknowledged fact that some of the leaders of the Civil War have not been, even at this late day, accorded the meed of credit to which they are justly entitled for the services they rendered their country in the days of its great peril; and it is also true that there were other leaders whose services have either been ignored or belittled amid a blare of unfair criticism, of ridicule and puerile detraction, largely incited by sensational muck-rakers, the most despicable of the entire brood of literary

scavengers that infest the intellectual life of the American people, who neither love man nor fear God.

General Burnside is one of those who has suffered greatly in reputation as a soldier, both during his lifetime and since his death, from these sources, and by no means less through biographies and other publications emanating from the pens of military officers who served in the Civil War, either under or over him. Experience has proved beyond reasonable doubt, that narratives of battles or military campaigns of which military officers are the authors, and who figure in the stories, should be accepted, regarding criticisms of either their superior or associate officers, as authoritative, only after the most impartial and careful scrutiny, that serious injury may not be done to others through prejudice, personal grievances, jealousy or other evil passions.

It is with a sense of sincere pride, together with a profound personal respect and admiration, that the name of Major-General Ambrose Everett Burnside is referred to as one of those leaders whose military services have not received that degree of fair and

just recognition to which their value to his country entitles them.

His is a name—and contradiction is confidently challenged to the contrary—that stands for all that is best in American manhood. His nobly generous character was the embodiment of all that is superbly manful and chivalrous, and which survives, together with the memory of his military achievements,—a living rebuke to minds rendered incapable through superficial judgment, prejudice and trafficking in sensationalism, of penetrating the mass of idle gossip, of derisive criticism, of irresponsible charges and malicious detraction, of probing for and bringing to the surface the truth as it actually exists.

The fighters of battles fought, the self-appointed critics, the perverters of history and the sensationalists, have been too preoccupied in their efforts to expose weak places in his military armor, or to spy out grounds, no matter how superficial, that might be made to belittle his services or subject his personality to derision or ridicule, to discover the high value of his military services in the Civil War as an asset of the country and its history.

It is not the purpose of the writer to exalt General Burnside as a genius in the art of war. He made no such claim for himself; neither do his friends for him. Neither shall I attempt to apologize for any mistakes or failures for which he may have been responsible. Mistakes and failures have been the lot, during all time, of the greatest military captains in the world's history, as it was of the most exalted of his compatriots in arms.

It was the irony of fate that Napoleon failed at Moscow, at Leipsic, and finally at Waterloo, where his star of destiny was forever extinguished; but these defeats did not diminish the splendors of his genius nor detract from his military greatness.

The assault on Marye's Heights failed; yet Lee made as great a failure when he hurled Pickett's fifteen thousand Virginians against the steel-girt slopes of Cemetery Ridge; and Grant committed no less an one when he gave the order that sent the Army of the Potomac into the jaws of hell at Cold Harbor. But now, no one thinks of detracting from or depreciating either the services, character or reputation of Generals Grant or Lee.

It is not intended, either, to shrink from defending the memory of General Burnside regarding mistakes or failures for which he assumed responsibility, not altogether his own, under stress of an intensely patriotic sense of duty, that moved him to self-sacrifice rather than imperil the cause of his country by adding to the then existing dissensions in the army through any attempt of his own to seek redress for wrongs from which he had suffered. There is the true ring of a great soul, as well as a pathos, in General Burnside's reply to the importunities of his closest friends in the army, who were familiar with his wrongs, to personally defend himself after he had been viciously arraigned regarding the Fredericksburg Campaign.

"Time and history," he declared, "will vindicate me; and if they fail to do so, it is better that I should remain under a cloud, than that a word should be added to the dissensions already too prevalent in the army."

So persistent have been and are now his detractors in their arraignments regarding both his military services and his personality, that a very con-

siderable number of the general public have become greatly prejudiced, having been insidiously led to believe that he was not only in a large measure incompetent as a military leader, but that his military career was a failure; and thus the valuable services he rendered his country during the period of its great peril are being ignored or belittled amid unreasonable criticisms and scandalous detractions.

Obviously the time has arrived when the countrymen of General Burnside who knew him best, and are familiar with the value of his services, can no longer keep silent.

For these reasons the writer is moved to take upon himself the task, as a work of love as well as of duty, of presenting the claims of General Burnside's military services for a fair and just recognition, although it is candidly confessed that there are many among the hosts of his surviving friends and admirers who are far better qualified for the work than himself, if they could be prevailed upon to assume it. The most that it is expected to accomplish by this poor endeavor is to blaze the way for others to follow, and clear up the perplexing tangle of truth and falsehood.

No attempt will be made to analyze the military campaigns or movements in which General Burnside took a subordinate part, or which were executed under his immediate direction during the Civil War; but only in a general way to refer to them and point out the value of his services, taking into account the entire field of his military career; the sole end and purpose being that the truth may be made to appear, so that the true value of General Burnside's military services during the period of the Civil War as an asset of his country and of its history may be fairly and justly estimated and shown.

The statement is made, without fear of challenge from fair-minded, truth-loving men, that General Burnside rendered inestimable military services in the field during the Civil War, manifesting on many occasions a versatility of initiative in both suggesting and framing plans for military campaigns, original, brilliant and practical in conception, some of which were later adopted and carried into execution either by himself, or by others of his compatriots in arms, to the honor and glory of the armies

of the Union, but for which due credit has not been awarded him.

On Monday, April 15, 1861, Ambrose Everett Burnside received in the New York office of the Illinois Central Railroad the following telegram from War Governor William Sprague:

“A regiment of Rhode Island troops will go to Washington this week. How soon can you come on and take command?”

He promptly answered, “At once.”

Colonel Burnside reached Washington but a few days after Fort Sumter was fired on, in command of the First Regiment Rhode Island Detached Militia, a battalion of which reached Washington shortly before the main body, being the first fully uniformed, armed and equipped troops to report to the Commander-in-Chief, which was accomplished through the personal efforts of both Governor Sprague and himself.

He hastened, on reaching Washington, to call on General McDowell, advising delay in making the proposed advance on the forces of Secession, then concentrating in Virginia, urging that the Union

troops which were hurrying to Washington but partially uniformed, undisciplined and indifferently armed and equipped, were not in fit condition for the contemplated movement against the enemy. He was looked upon with suspicion of his loyalty by the politicians who were present. It was then the politicians' campaign, whose slogan was, "On to Richmond."

Had Burnside's advice, and that of others of like experience and military judgment, been heeded, the country would doubtless have escaped the defeat at Bull Run and the demoralization that followed, and possibly the war might have been sooner ended.

His conduct at Bull Run was conspicuously cool, gallant and brave, handling the troops under his command with a skill which attracted the favorable notice of the country, and commanded the confidence of President Lincoln and his official advisers, all of which resulted in his promotion on August 6, 1861, to the rank of Brigadier-General of Volunteers.

He was ordered to report to General McClellan, who had practically succeeded General Scott as Commanding General, and who placed him in charge

of the new troops as they arrived in Washington, with orders to attend to their drill and discipline, preparatory to their merger into the brigades and divisions then being organized in Washington under the name of the Army of the Potomac.

This duty was an interesting service, but soon became irksome to General Burnside, as his mind grappled with the problems in the larger field of military activities, stimulated, doubtless, by a desire to do something to dispel the gloomy forebodings that prevailed in the eastern section of the country, where only defeats had thus far met the efforts of our armies, and which were giving encouragement to copperheads and other unfriendly critics of the Government's endeavors to suppress what in those days was called treason and rebellion.

Early in October of 1861, while chatting with General McClellan, a turn in the conversation afforded General Burnside an opportunity to suggest a plan for raising a coast division to which he had been giving considerable thought.

After giving a somewhat detailed statement of his plan, General McClellan asked him to put it in

writing as soon as possible, which he did, presenting it the next day. McClellan indorsed it with his approval, and forwarded it at once to the Secretary of War, by whom it was speedily approved. The general details of the plan, to use the words of Burnside, were:

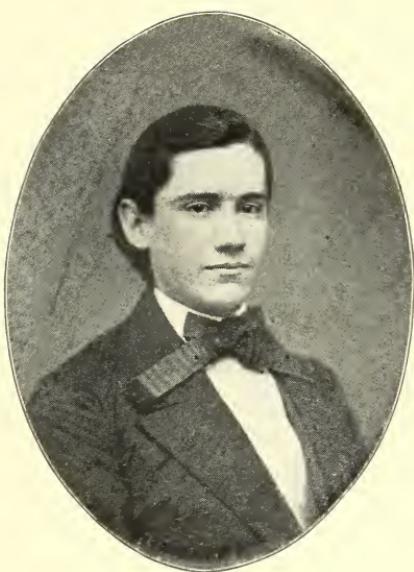
"To organize a division of from twelve to fifteen thousand men, and to fit out a fleet of light draft steamers, sailing vessels and barges, large enough to transport the division, its armament and supplies, so that it could be rapidly thrown from point to point on the coast with a view to establishing lodgments on the Southern coast, landing troops and penetrating into the interior, thereby threatening the lines of the enemy's transportation in the rear of the main army of the enemy then concentrating in Virginia, and holding possession of the inland waters on the Atlantic coast."

Upon the approval of his plan Burnside was ordered to proceed at once to New York and fit out a fleet for the expedition as planned. On the 23d of October, 1861, his headquarters were established at Annapolis, Maryland, for the concentration of the division and for its drill and discipline. It was very

difficult to secure the necessary vessels of suitable light draft for the expedition, the supply having been nearly exhausted by requisitions of the Government for other purposes, so that it was not until December 12 that General Burnside telegraphed General McClellan that a sufficient amount of transportation and armament had been secured for the expedition.

It was a nondescript aggregation of crafts improvised for this service, and had it not been for its martial mission it might have served as a spectacular burlesque at sea.

Forty-six transports were employed, eleven of which were steamers. There were also nine armed propellers to act as gunboats, and five North River barges armed as floating batteries, carrying altogether forty-seven guns, mostly of small calibre. Those formed the army division and were under the command of Commander Samuel F. Hazard. A naval squadron composed of twenty vessels, carrying fifty-five heavy guns, was commanded by Commodore Goldsborough. The land forces were divided into three brigades under the command of Brigadier-



DANIEL R. BALLOU  
Taken about the time of the war



Generals Foster, Reno and Parke, personal friends of Burnside.

On the night of the 11th of January, 1862, the fleet set sail from Fortress Monroe under sealed orders, to be opened six miles out at sea.

Notwithstanding the public clamor of distrust and severe criticisms touching the seaworthiness of the vessels composing the fleet, together with predictions of disaster and failure, General Burnside, although knowing the weakness of the vessels, deemed it necessary for the cause of his country to prosecute the enterprise even if some lives should be lost by wrecks. In order that the public might be assured of his own faith in the capacity of the vessels for the required service, which were the best that could be procured at this time, and that he himself might not enjoy any superior protection over that of any of his men, he selected the smallest vessel of the fleet, a little propeller called the "Picket," for his headquarters,—a boat which would be less able to cope with a storm at sea than any of the other and larger crafts,—thus exhibiting that unselfish, self-sacrificing spirit that characterized his entire mili-

tary career. The weather was somewhat threatening as the fleet put to sea, yet not sufficiently so as to cause alarm; but on the 12th of January a terrific storm burst upon the devoted fleet, lashing the waters into a fury of raging billows that pounded and broke over the vessels, which vainly endeavored to breast their overwhelming blows as they staggered and reeled amid the frightful warring of the elements.

On board the little headquarters boat, "Picket," tossed about as a cockle-shell, now engulfed by the tempestuous sea, strained and quivering to the uttermost as it rose on the crests of the furious waves, was seen the stalwart and knightly form of General Burnside, grasping the rigging of the little propeller and peering anxiously through the mists and drenching spray, watching the vessels of his fleet struggling in the teeth of the frightful gale. He stood like a Viking on the deck of his little steamer, hailing each passing vessel, inquiring after the welfare of the men, and speaking words of encouragement and cheer.

Arriving off Hatteras, the vessels sought entrance

to Pamlico Sound, those of light draft working their way over the bar into the inlet or into the calmer waters beyond, while those that turned out to be of too great draft headed off shore or sought the lee of the cape for greater safety.

For two weeks the storm raged, imperiling the vessels that were drifting storm-tossed outside the bar, together with their precious freights of human life and of horses, munitions and supplies.

On the 25th of January the storm broke, and the vessels held so long outside the bar had found their way into the inlet, with the exception of three, which succumbed to the storm and went down, but without loss of human life.

On the 26th an attempt was made to bring the vessels remaining in the inlet into the sound, but very many of them were unable, by reason of their eight feet draft, to pass over the "swash," so-called, that separates the inlet from the sound, and upon which there was but six feet of water. A breach, therefore, had to be made for their passage, which consumed several days, so that it was not until February 4 that the entire fleet came to anchor in

the sound, and orders were given for the movement on Roanoke Island.

General Burnside had scarcely slept night or day during the fearful experiences of that two weeks of threatened disaster, devoting his undivided attention and energy to the management of the great fleet. When a signal of distress was sounded or displayed during the night or day, he was the first man off to render assistance, performing the duties of life-saver, of navigator, pilot and harbor-master, besides acting both as general and admiral, being loyally assisted by his subordinates and the officers of the navy. Happily, owing to his skilful management and untiring vigilance, but two lives were lost.

No attempt will be made to describe the movements of the army and naval forces which resulted in the brilliant victories of Roanoke Island of February 8, Newbern of March 14, and of Fort Macon of April 26, 1862, won under the immediate direction of General Burnside, personally present in the field.

The value of these victories was inestimable. The defeat of Big Bethel, the disaster at Bull Run, and the tragedy of Ball's Bluff, together with an absence

of military success in the eastern section of the country, had caused gloomy forebodings and discouragement among the friends of the Union, and on the other hand, had excited disloyal criticism among the copperhead element; but now confidence was restored, and there was great rejoicing and renewal of courage among the loyal element of the North. The story of the expedition, together with the results of the campaign, have been presented somewhat in detail because they afford a true insight into the high character of Burnside as a soldier and man, exhibiting, as he did, eminent ability as a strategist, conscientious, prudent and successful leadership, conspicuous courage under fire, together with a modest and unassuming demeanor in the midst of the plaudits of his countrymen.

In appreciation of the victories of Roanoke Island and Newbern, President Lincoln nominated him a Major-General of Volunteers, and the Senate promptly, on March 18, 1862, confirmed the appointment. Upon the receipt of the news at Washington of the victory at Newbern, Secretary Stanton, in a dispatch, conveyed, in behalf of the President, the

Department and the whole nation, a tender of thanks for distinguished services rendered by General Burnside and the officers and men under his command.

The General Assembly of Rhode Island voted General Burnside a sword, together with its thanks. The Legislatures of Massachusetts and Ohio, then in session, also passed congratulatory resolutions.

During the latter part of June, 1862, Burnside was summoned to a conference with General McClellan at Fortress Monroe, and promptly answered the call with his presence. Returning to Newbern, he held himself in readiness to respond to further orders. The retreat of McClellan to Harrison's Landing in July suspended, for the time being, further contemplated military operations in North Carolina, namely, in the neighborhood of Raleigh in case of McClellan's success on the Peninsula, a part of Burnside's original plan, with the purpose of cutting off Lee's retreat into the Gulf States, his chief source of supplies.

Burnside, early in July, after McClellan retreated to Harrison's Landing, was recalled from North

Carolina with two of his divisions, primarily to reinforce the Army of the Potomac. He embarked his divisions, which, on reaching Fortress Monroe, were there detained under special orders from Washington until about the 2d of August, when they were ordered to proceed to Acquia Creek, where they arrived on the 4th and 5th. General Burnside, on arriving with his command at Fortress Monroe, met President Lincoln, with whom he had a conference. In the meanwhile he visited Washington, where, at the conclusion of a long interview with President Lincoln, General Halleck and Secretary of War Stanton, the President offered him the command of the Army of the Potomac, which he courteously and peremptorily declined. In the meantime, after his command had reached Acquia Creek, it was reorganized as the Ninth Corps, with which, reinforced by General Isaac Stevens' division, he was ordered to proceed to the Rappahannock to co-operate with the Army of Virginia under General Pope, with headquarters at Fredericksburg. General McClellan, under orders, withdrew from the position occupied by him on August 20, and commenced

to embark his troops, a large detachment of which disembarked at Acquia Creek, to which point he was ordered to hasten, arriving there on the morning of the 24th in the expectation, as he says, of advancing to the relief of Burnside and General Pope, who were reported hard-pressed by the Confederates. Soon after he was ordered to proceed to Alexandria, arriving there on August 26, his army having been concentrated in that neighborhood. Here he was soon practically deposed, General Halleck having been appointed to succeed him in the chief command.

On taking command at Fredericksburg, Burnside was confronted by a question of rank,—being the superior of General Pope,—but in the same generous and loyal spirit he never failed during his military career to display, when occasion arose, he cheerfully and without question assumed the subordinate place. General Burnside furnished General Pope during the final days of his disastrous campaign in Virginia, his unqualified loyal support, which elicited his warmest expressions of gratitude and appreciation.

The timely arrival at Fredericksburg of the Ninth Corps, reinforced by Stevens' division, and the prompt assistance rendered by Burnside, doubtless prevented the turning of Pope's left flank, which, had the Confederates succeeded in doing, would most likely have resulted in cutting off his army from Washington.

The Confederate forces confronting Pope, reinforced by Lee's veterans, fresh from their successes on the Peninsula, were aggressively forcing the fighting, which resulted in his being thrown back upon the defenses of Washington. The enemy were at the same time pressing vigorously upon Burnside, when he was ordered to withdraw his troops from Fredericksburg and bring them to the Capital. He promptly burned all the bridges leading to the town, a machine-shop and the government buildings. Through cool judgment and prompt action, together with sleepless vigilance and untiring personal exertion, he brought, under cover of the night, his column, his artillery and wagon train over almost impassable roads safely to Acquia Creek. Here, under the protection of the gunboats and his own artillery,

the enemy hanging close on his rear, he embarked his troops and munitions, remaining behind and firing the government buildings, after which he started for Washington.

Arriving at the Capital, he found the high officials, as well as the inhabitants, in a perturbed state, from fear of the capture of the city or a possible invasion of the North.

The fateful days of the summer and fall of 1862 were quite the gloomiest of any period of the great war. The failure of the Peninsular Campaign and the defeat at the second Bull Run battle well-nigh overwhelmed the loyal hearts of the country with discouragement and apprehension, and now, on the closing days of the long summer period of failure and disaster, as the wailing of bereaved kindred ascended from the hearthstones of thousands of homes, rendered desolate by battle-slain fathers, sons and lovers, the specter of dreadful war rose up in their distracted visions, stalking in the peaceful valleys and within the gates of the great cities of the Northland.

There was good cause for fear, as Lee's ragged

and hungry veterans, their breasts swelling with martial ardor, incited by the recent successes of their arms, were hovering about the gates of the Capital, eager and impatient to be led to its assault, or, what was more their desire, to the fertile valleys of the Northland, where they might levy tribute on their overflowing granaries, their herds and flocks, and the storehouses of rich merchandise that abounded in the great cities, wherewith to feast their famished bodies and clothe their nakedness.

Facing these impending dangers, the President again turned to Burnside, and with the approval of his official advisers, tendered him the command of the armies concentrated in and about Washington, as the most available general officer to marshal the forces and lead them successfully against the invader.

The tender of this high command was most enticing, being one that would have turned the head of a vain, self-seeking nature. But however alluring the opportunity it afforded General Burnside to tempt fate for the winning of fame in a great military struggle, he again manifested the same self-abjura-

tion and exalted patriotism as on the occasion of the former tender of the command of the Army of the Potomac. He saw with a clear vision that General McClellan, with his popular hold upon the veterans of the Army of the Potomac, was the commander in this emergency best qualified to successfully bring order out of existing confusion, arouse the rank and file of the various military organizations to enthusiastic action under his leadership, for repelling the invading foe. Burnside hesitated not a moment in refusing the honor, and, at the same time, earnestly urged the President to reinstate McClellan in the command.

The situation was too grave and urgent for further delay, and the President summoned McClellan to take command of "all the troops for the defense of the Capital." General Lee, having meanwhile withdrawn his army from before Washington, was now marching into Maryland. McClellan promptly detailed sufficient garrisons for the occupation of the several forts around Washington, and quickly organized an army and started for the enemy, five days after the defeat of General Pope at Second

Bull Run. Burnside was placed in the advance in command of the right wing, formed of the First Corps under General Hooker, General Cox's Kanawha Division and the Ninth Corps under General Reno. On September 13 the advance guard of Burnside's column came in contact with the enemy, with whom there was skirmishing. Later in the day Burnside's advance guard entered Frederick, Maryland, just as Wade Hampton's cavalry, Lee's rear guard, were leaving at the other end of the street.

The Union troops were received with the most patriotic expressions of loyalty and delight. Burnside, arriving later in the evening, was welcomed with the wildest demonstration of joy, and McClellan, arriving the next morning, was accorded a reception no less ardent and enthusiastic.

On the morning of September 14 Burnside started from Middleton toward South Mountain, about three miles distant, to meet the enemy. Pleasanton, moving forward from Middleton at six o'clock, met with determined resistance from a large force of the enemy. The battle opened with an artillery duel between batteries at long range. The infantry coming

up soon after, opened fire, which the Confederates briskly returned, as they retreated slowly up the mountain side, being hard pressed by Cox's division, which finally gained the crest, where it halted to await the arrival of the Ninth Corps. Wilcox's division was the first to arrive, reporting to Cox, the senior officer, at about two o'clock. McClellan, Burnside and Reno came soon after Wilcox's division, to a knoll in the valley which had been Pleasanton's position, and from this point, a central one in the midst of curving hills, issued their orders. McClellan established his headquarters at this point, where he remained in apparently most friendly co-operation with Burnside, as commander of the right wing, until the close of the engagement.

The battle raged fiercely until the dusk of evening, when General Reno fell, greatly lamented by the entire army. During the night the Confederates withdrew and retreated down the mountain, leaving the battlefield in possession of Burnside's command. The troops engaged at the summit, bivouacked for the night on the battlefield where the severest fighting took place, resting on their arms.

General McClellan, in his dispatch, sent off that night to the President, characterized the result of the battle as "a brilliant victory."

During the morning hours of the 15th orders were given for an advance of the army on the roads leading to Sharpsburg. In consequence of unavoidable delays, Burnside's column did not get a clear way to move until past noon, doubtless in part caused by the change in his position to the left of the line.

In the late afternoon of the 16th McClellan came in contact with the enemy in the neighborhood of Antietam Creek.

General Lee, having taken advantage of the past two days, had intrenched himself in a strong position of his own choosing, on the westerly side of the creek, in front of Sharpsburg.

Late in the afternoon, through McClellan's disposition of his forces, Burnside found himself with a serious task confronting him, in command of only the Ninth Corps and the Kanawha Division under General Isaac B. Cox, and occupying the extreme left of the line, with his troops disposed along the easterly side of Antietam Creek.

Under the instructions given Burnside on the evening of the 16th, he was to hold his command in readiness to advance, when ordered on the next morning, and carry the bridge over Antietam Creek, since known as "Burnside Bridge," together with the heights beyond, and, having gained their crest, to press the attack on the Confederate right wing, capture Sharpsburg and cut off the retreat of the enemy. As this would be a perilous movement, as well as a difficult one to accomplish, he called together his commanding officers during that evening, and carefully instructed them in the detail necessary for its execution.

At ten o'clock the next morning Burnside received the order of McClellan to carry the bridge, as directed the night before. This order was at once carried into effect. General Cox, who had been standing by Burnside all the morning, watching the fight, started at once to attend to the details of which he had charge for carrying the order into effect, and without delay caused the troops to advance as directed. It was an appalling task to carry the bridge and heights beyond. The heights and crest bristled

with rifle-pits and stone walls, behind which were posted the enemy's artillery, infantry and sharp-shooters, from which protection a destructive enfilading fire was directed against the Union columns in their struggle to carry the bridge and heights. For three mortal hours the gallant veterans of Burnside's command struggled back and forth amid a fierce and deadly tempest of shrapnel, of flying rifle bullets and exploding shells, in heroic assaults at the bridge, the fords of the Creek and the well-nigh impregnable heights beyond, and when at length they succeeded in carrying the bridge and gaining a foothold under the crest, the ground over which they fought their way was drenched and crimsoned with blood, shed as a full-measure offering, even to overflowing, to their country's cause.

Beneath the crest of the embattled heights the assaulting troops were compelled to halt and make necessary preparations for their further advance. It was now one o'clock, three hours having been consumed in gaining their position. McClellan, hearing of the halt, dispatched a succession of imperative orders, impatient in tone, for a forward move-

ment, which was then physically impossible. Sturgis's Division was so exhausted that reserves had to be ordered up and placed in its front. Some of the command had exhausted their ammunition. Hurry orders were sent out for troops to replace Sturgis's Division and for the ammunition train to cross the bridge. After most strenuous exertions, in which Burnside lent his personal assistance, the preparations were completed, and at three o'clock the troops again advanced, carrying the crest and driving the Confederates to the vicinity of Sharpsburg. McClellan says, in his "Own Story":

"The advance was then gallantly resumed, the enemy was driven back from the guns, the heights handsomely carried and a portion of the troops reached Sharpsburg."

It was now nearly dark and the enemy was then reinforced by the troops of A. P. Hill, who had just arrived from Harper's Ferry, which made a vigorous attack on Burnside's left flank, forcing his lines back to the lower line of the hills near the bridge. As his lines were driven back the situation became extremely critical. Burnside, realizing the danger

of being forced back across the bridge, dispatched an aide to McClellan with the message:

—“I want troops and guns. If you do not send them I cannot hold my position for half an hour.”

“Tell General Burnside,” said McClellan, . . . “he must hold his ground till dark, at any cost. I will send him a battery; I cannot do more.” As the aide was riding away he called him back. “Tell him also, that if he cannot hold his ground, then the bridge to the last man; always the bridge; if the bridge is lost, all will be lost.”

The battle ceased as night cast its sable wings over the ghastly scenes of war’s dreadful carnage, calmness succeeding the strain and excitement evoked by the roar of artillery, the crash of musketry, the battle cries and the clamor of the charge. And now the wearied and exhausted heroes of Burnside’s command lay down upon the ground near the bridge which they had wrested from the enemy in a titanic struggle, to rest on their arms.

Late in the evening of the day of the battle General Burnside called on General McClellan at his headquarters, and in conversation concerning the

events of the day suggested the advisability of resuming the battle on the following morning, "offering to lead an advance against the enemy, provided McClellan would give him five thousand fresh troops to pass in advance of his Ninth Corps." General McClellan declined to take the responsibility of renewing the engagement, and accordingly General Lee, undisturbed by McClellan's veteran army, which had expectantly waited to be again led to the attack, leisurely transported across the Potomac his munitions and supplies, together with the booty captured at Harper's Ferry and in Maryland, and on the 19th of September quietly crossed the river with his troops into Virginia, passing by easy stages into the Shenandoah Valley, where his veterans sat down and enjoyed the fruits of their Maryland campaign, together with a recuperative rest from their strenuous service.

On October 13 General Burnside, under orders of General McClellan, strangely delayed, crossed the Potomac just below Harper's Ferry and marched

along the easterly base of the Blue Ridge Mountains, with the purpose of preventing Lee from escaping through any of the passes; but meanwhile the Confederate Army had slipped through Thoroughfare Gap, its right wing in camp at Culpepper Court House, with its left resting in the valley.

What happened on the night of November 7, 1862, is familiar history. It was a dramatic incident in a dismal setting. It was the appearance at the tent of General Burnside in a blinding snowstorm, of General Buckingham, bearing as the special confidential messenger of President Lincoln, an order relieving General McClellan from the command of the Army of the Potomac, with instructions to report at Trenton, New Jersey, for further orders, accompanied by an order placing General Burnside in command, to which he reluctantly yielded obedience, solely because it came as an order; and then the cold and cheerless night ride of Generals Buckingham and Burnside through the winter's blizzard to the headquarters of McClellan, twenty miles away, on

38 MAJOR-GENERAL AMBROSE EVERETT BURNSIDE.

the delicate mission of notifying him that he was relieved, and of the succession of Burnside to the command.

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This story is continued in the next paper (Series 7, No. 9) of these Publications.







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